

SECTION II.—NATAL FIELD ARMY.

No. 1.

From General Sir Redvers Buller to the
Secretary of State for War.
(Through the Field-Marshal Commanding-in
Chief, Cape Town.)

Spearman's Hill Camp,

Sir,
2nd February, 1900.

I have the honour to forward a despatch from Lieut.-General Sir George White, which I have only just received by runner. It is in continuation of his despatch of the 2nd November, 1899,* and it will be seen by paragraph 12 that it deals only with his operations up to 30th October, 1899.

It may, therefore, I think, be inferred that the services of the Officers, non-commissioned officers and men which he brings to notice were rendered by them prior to that date.

I have, &c.,

REDVERS BULLER, General.

Jacobsdal,

18th February, 1900.

Secretary of State for War.

Forwarded.

ROBERTS, Field-Marshal,
Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa.

From Lieut.-General Sir George White, V.C.,
G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., Commanding the
British Forces in Natal, to the Secretary of
State for War.

(Through the General Officer Commanding in
South Africa.)

Ladysmith, Natal, 2nd December, 1899.
Sir,

In continuation of my despatch of 2nd November, 1899, I have now the honour to report the occurrences of 24th October, referred to briefly in the last paragraph of my above-mentioned despatch. On that date I marched out of Ladysmith at dawn with the 5th Lancers, 19th Hussars, Imperial Light Horse, Natal Mounted Volunteers, 42nd and 53rd Batteries, Royal Field Artillery; No. 10 Mountain Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery; 1st Bn. Liverpool Regiment, 1st Bn. Devonshire Regiment, 1st Bn. Gloucestershire Regiment, and 2nd Bn. King's Royal Rifle Corps. The mounted troops were sent on in advance, and, after going about 6 miles along the Newcastle Road, came under rifle fire from the hills on their left on Rietfontein Farm. The 19th Hussars pushed on over the Modder Spruit and seized and held a ridge about 2 miles beyond that stream by dismounted fire, while watching the country to the front and flanks with patrols. The 5th Lancers similarly seized and held ridges south of the Modder Spruit, as also did the Imperial Light Horse. By this disposition of the mounted troops my right flank was entirely protected during the subsequent action.

2. At 8 a.m. I arrived at Rietfontein at the head of the main body. At this moment the enemy opened artillery fire on my advanced Cavalry from a point high up on the Intintanyone Mountain, and about 5,000 yards to the west of the main road, at which he had apparently posted four guns. My artillery was at once ordered to wheel off the road and come into action against these guns, which opened fire on them, but were quickly silenced. Leaving the 2nd Bn. King's Royal Rifle Corps with the baggage waggons, I moved the remainder of

the Infantry under the shelter of a high ridge, parallel to the road, and facing the Intintanyone Mountain. The 1st Bn. Gloucestershire Regiment on the left, and the 1st Bn. Liverpool Regiment on the right were then advanced to the crest of this ridge, the Artillery also advancing and coming into action on the crest line between these two regiments. The position thus attained was one most suitable to my purpose, which was to prevent the enemy moving to the east, across the Newcastle Road, and attacking Brigadier-General Yule's force during its retirement from Dundee.

3. Our Artillery was entirely successful in preventing the enemy from making any further use of his guns, but a severe fire fight gradually developed between my troops and the enemy's infantry, and it became necessary to push the 1st Bn. Devonshire Regiment also to the crest of the ridge, half the 2nd Bn. King's Royal Rifle Corps being brought up from the wagons to take their place in reserve. In this Infantry fight our Artillery rendered great assistance, searching out the crest line and reverse slopes of the opposing ridges most effectively, and thus keeping down the enemy's rifle fire. Meanwhile the Natal Mounted Volunteers, who had been with the Cavalry, had been recalled, and, as the enemy showed some disposition to work round my left flank, as if to cut me from Ladysmith, I sent this force, under Colonel Royston, to work round the Boer right and cover my left flank, a movement which was most successfully performed. It was no part of my plan to deliver an attack on the enemy, posted as he was in ground exceptionally well suited to his tactics, and especially difficult for our troops; I contented myself, therefore, with maintaining the position I had gained. The Boers, on the other hand, were unwilling to attack us except by fire at long ranges, and, as they could not approach Brigadier-General Yule's force without doing so, they gradually withdrew to the westward. By 2 p.m. firing had ceased, and as time had now been afforded for the Dundee column to pass the point of danger I returned with my troops to Ladysmith. Our casualties consisted of one Officer and 11 non-commissioned officers and men killed, six Officers and 97 non-commissioned officers and men wounded, and two non-commissioned officers and men missing. The enemy's loss was heavy, particularly from artillery fire.

4. On 25th October I sent out a force, under Lieut.-Colonel Coxhead, R.A., to meet and, if necessary, to assist Brigadier-General Yule. This force got touch with the Dundee column that afternoon, and, as already reported, both columns reached Ladysmith next morning (26th October) without any interference from the enemy.

5. On 27th, 28th and 29th October the enemy gradually approached Ladysmith from the west, north, and north-east. These days were spent by us in reconnaissances with a view to finding a favourable opportunity to strike a blow at him. On 29th October our Cavalry located a considerable Boer force, with artillery on Long Hill, north-east of Ladysmith, and well within striking distance. I accordingly issued orders for an attack next day, which resulted in the action of Lombard's Kop.

6. My object was, in the first instance, to carry Long Hill, and, in the event of success, to similarly carry Pepworth's Hill, sending, at the

* Already published.